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ABSTRACT

To investigate the social context of education for low-income Southerners, a study concentrating on white Anglo-Saxon Protestants in a rural Southern mill village in general, and on 22 white 10th grade children and their parents in particular, used a combination of ethnographic techniques and standardized interview questions. Responses concerning 2 descriptive research questions, "What is the parents' orientation toward education and toward upward mobility through education?" and "What is the parents' orientation toward encouragement of education at home?" were gathered from 11 families, interviewed and observed in their homes; information about 11 other families came from informants. Parents responded positively to global questions about education and upward mobility through education, and about home encouragement of education, an expected "lip-service" response. However, answers to specific questions concerning expressed behaviors of these attitudes were mainly negative, as were those about leaving the village for further education or job improvement. It was inconceivable that any of the children would go to college or move away from family and community. Thus, cultural values are an impediment to education and upward mobility. Educators should know these underlying cultural reasons why rural children of such background do not aspire educationally or occupationally. (JD)

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SOUTHERN RURAL PARENTS' ORIENTATION TOWARD EDUCATION AND UPWARD MOBILITY FOR THEIR CHILDREN

by

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This paper focuses on one element of a larger exploratory, ethnographic study of a rural Southern mill village in general and of twenty-two white children and their parents in particular and discusses parents' attitudes toward education and upward mobility as well as their expressed behavior of these attitudes. Although my interest in Southern mill villages has increased over the years, it was not the original reason for selecting one of them for intensive ongoing study. I was interested in education in rural America in general, in educating rural white Anglo-Saxon Protestants in particular.

Edington has written in "Disadvantaged Rural Youth" (1970:69): "Previous research reviews have tended to overlook the rural student and the characteristics that may be unique to him and his situation." He goes on to say that much of the material cited in his review of the literature "came from fugitive documents of limited circulation." In a bibliography of abstracts of articles on rural sociology covering seventy years (up to 1972), there are only fifty entries for education and of these only a very few that pertain to educating rural WASP America (Bertrand 1972).

Recently, Ford (1978) edited a book of articles about rural America that includes reports on values and a few items on education. However, even this current work states that a review of the literature on rural America "yielded a paucity of hard and comprehensive data" (Larson 1978:91). The most significant work on the subject of educating rural America is Sher's controversial book Education in Rural America (1977) which, though spotlighting educational problems in West Virginia and Vermont as case studies and thus the values of WASP rural populations, is mostly concerned with policymaking in rural schools and not the social context of education per se. Here and there can be found a few ethnographic case studies that include as

a sideline rural working-class whites in an educational context (Hicks 1976; Lanz 1971).

All in all, then, there is very little material on educating the rural, working-class WASP population. Even Edington's scholarly review of the literature mentioned previously does not include this segment of rural America. In focusing on the educational problems of low-income rural Southerners, we have a concentration of the white Anglo-Saxon Protestant element which has rarely been researched.

Most of the WASP population in the rural South can trace back several generations of simply being Protestant Southerners. In the past, of course, there were ethnic elements; but by now these have been so watered down that hardly anyone refers to such origins except in terms of distant ancestors. There is, in fact, little or no intermarrying with non-Southerners, although this is not so true of urban/suburban areas in the South. It is fairly well known that Catholicism does not abound in the South, and in the rural areas one can be hard pressed to know where the nearest Catholic church is.

The people in Southern rural areas cling to many of the traditions and elements that began to disappear during the last two generations in nonrural areas of the South (Dillman 1976). In an article on the effects of farm background on the values of urban residents, the authors state that "Several previous studies indicate that southerners differ from residents of other regions in terms of various attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors" (Grasmick and Grasmick 1978:382). This is Reed's position throughout his work (1972) on the persistence of Southern culture. The Grasmicks argue that it is not Southern culture <u>per se</u> but the pervasiveness of generational farm background among Southerners that has created a "culture lag." Regardless of cause, the effect nevertheless is agreed upon: persistent tradi-

tionalism among Southerners, particularly those from a rural background.

The Southern mill towns are uniquely representative of the working-class WASP element and are probably the most homogeneously populated pockets of this group in the country other than those scattered throughout Appalachia. The extreme density of the population in a mill town makes it much more conveniently approachable than similar enclaves in Appalachia. These factors and my being a native Southerner with the usual vast kinship network have made the Southern mill town an ideal and accessible setting for my research on the education of rural whites.

I would like to define very clearly what is meant by "mill town" as used in the context of this paper. "Mill town" is commonly applied to a variety of settings, on a continuum from a "company town" to a large city that is influenced greatly by the presence of a large mill. The town in this study, fictitiously called "Milldale,"* is like a company town in that it was at one time just that, a town owned by a company. However, a Southern mill town is unique and cannot be equated exactly with a non-Southern "company town." A town that revolved around a mill or factory was originally called a "mill village" and could be adjacent to a large city, sometimes within the city or town limits, or, as in many cases, an entity of its own, a mill town or a mill village. Milldale is the latter, a mill town, or village, not adjacent to or within the legal limits of a large city. This point is being labored to stress the importance of the homogeneity of the population compared with a large city that included--or includes--a mill, or mills, and therefore was--or is--called a mill town (Dillman 1979).

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*All names of places and persons have been changed. Also some factual information has been altered slightly to prevent identification.

Although Herring (1941) writes of "the passing of the mill village," and indeed the company ownership of such villages has passed to individual owners and thus the villages have been "sold," the houses in some villages, like Milldale, are still very much as they were decades ago. Even though all the mills in Milldale have closed down, the community still thinks of itself and is thought of as a mill town (the word "village" having become interchangeable with "town"). It would be difficult to erase the concept since the actual town and its houses are still intact with most of the families having been connected with the mills a generation ago. Milldale varies little from Pope's classic description of such communities (1929).

I cannot stress too much the problem of studying such a population as described here. It took six months for Hicks to establish his position in the Southern Appalachian community he was studying. He was thought at various times to be an "FBI man," a psychiatrist, a tourist, a new teacher--all negative connotations of being a "furriner" (Hicks 1976). Not only is there the wariness of outsiders--and even of a returned native with recognized attachments in the community--but appointments are not kept and do not begin on time.

Also, I cannot stress enough a second problem, that of the individual's saying one thing but doing another. I am referring to a methodological problem. For instance, if the answer to a global attitudinal question is not pursued with back-up questions about the behavioral expression of this attitude, not only are the results misleading, but they are in many cases incorrect. Hence, the imperative necessity for a qualitative case-study approach as well as in-depth, probing questions.

With such impediments in mind, I believe those attending this session (or reading this paper) will have a better understanding of why there is

such a small sample in the study and why qualitative research techniques must be utilized in such a study. Also, it will be seen that because of the homogeneity of the population and the unanimity among most respondents it is appropriate to view the findings for such a small sample as valuable research information.

THE STUDY

In its qualitative approach, the study utilized a combination of ethnographic techniques and standardized interview questions. The sample consisted of twenty-two white tenth-grade children, all Anglo-Saxon Protestants (for at least three generations) from working-class families. Eleven of the children and their families were interviewed and observed in their homes. Information about the other eleven families was gathered through informants.

This paper reports on responses from the eleven case study families for interview items covering two research questions. One short ethnographic account of the key informant family is included.

Although the larger study included a theoretical framework centered on alienation from and allegiance to school in the context of a move from the community school to the new consolidated one, we are concerned here only with two descriptive research questions:

1. What is the parents' orientation toward education and toward upward mobility through education?

2. What is the parents' orientation toward encouragement of education at home?

Regarding the first research question, it was expected that parents would report a more positive orientation in their expressed attitudes toward general questions than toward educational behaviors and specific educational attitudes. For example, although it was expected that the parents would

report educational aspirations for higher education for their children, they would not report making specific plans for the children's educational advancement. In addition, it was expected that they would not be favorable toward their children moving away from family and community for a good job nor would they be oriented toward educational success to get a good job or to get into college. Also, I felt that the parents would be negatively oriented toward the school teaching academic/cultural subjects.

Regarding the second question, it was thought to be unlikely that parents with a negative general attitude would show much encouragement of education in the home setting. Further, it was felt that few parents would follow up concretely on their vague positive sentiments about education with behaviors that encourage education at home. The parents were expected to speak highly of the characteristics of the educated person, but it would be unlikely that they would report teaching their children pre-school educational skills, playing educational games with their children, or taking their children to cultural places and events.

These expectations of positive expressed attitudes and negative expressed behaviors stem from my observations of rural families in the North as well as in the South for more than two decades. They seem to have moved away from open stances such as "what's good enough for my father is good enough for me and for my son" and "children shouldn't know more than their parents."

THE FINDINGS

Throughout the reported quantitative findings, the designation "positive" refers to those answers or positions that are positive without reservation or ambivalence. "Negative" indicates that the respondent reported a negative stance with no reservation or ambivalence. "Ambivalent" indicates

uncertainties, ambiguities, or reservations. Occasionally, it was necessary to add the category, "no answer." Where items or questions within an item have been combined, arrival at "positive," "ambivalent," or "negative" scores is explained further as necessary.

The term "families" in the tables is used to indicate sets of one or both parents of the children. Four of the eleven mothers were divorced and one of these had remarried; one mother was a widow. Of the remaining six families, only two fathers participated in the entire interview, and there was no disagreement between the mother and father in these cases or in those where the father participated spasmodically. Therefore, we use the term "family" to mean the parental respondent of each child regardless of whether it represents one or two parents.

One child, though present, was very ill and did not participate. Therefore, there are answers for only ten children but answers for eleven "families." The children's answers were given not only in the presence of their parents but also in many cases after they had heard their parents' answers and therefore are not very reliable. Typical of the culture, there was no way to separate parents and children without offense.

Parents' Orientation Toward Education and Toward Upward Mobility Through Education

First, we will look at the results of the following measures of orientation to education and toward upward mobility through education: attitudes toward reading, attitudes toward library use, hope for the child to get a better education than parents, and desire for the child to go to college. These global aspirations were indeed affirmative or with reservations in a few cases but with no negative orientation being reported. Table 1 shows the results specifically.

TABLE 1

NUMBER OF CHILDREN WITH FAMILIES EXPRESSING POSITIVE, AMBIVALENT, OR NEGATIVE GLOBAL ATTITUDES TOWARD EDUCATION AND TOWARD UPWARD MOBILITY THROUGH EDUCATION FOR THEIR CHILDREN, USING FIVE MEASURES

	Positive	Ambivalent	Negative
Attitudes toward reading (Item 3)	7	4	0
Attitudes toward library use (Item 4)	8	3	0
Hope for child to get a better education than parents (Item 20)	11	0	0
Want(ed)* child to go to college (Item 22)	11	0	0

In answer to Item 3 (which had 5 questions), the parents of seven of the eleven children agreed without reservations or ambivalence that reading books and magazines

- is not a waste of time,
- is not a waste of money,
- can help you in raising your children,
- is a good thing for your children to see you doing,
- can make you smarter.

Ambivalence was expressed in a standard form: "if it's the right kind of book."

In answer to Item 4 (which had four questions), eight parents agreed without reservations or ambivalence that going to the library

*Changed to "wanted" when child had dropped out of school.

- is not a waste of time,
- is good for your children,
- helps your children in school,
- is something you like to do or would like to do.

Three had one or two reservations. The last part of this item included the two options as a way of finding out if they themselves went to the library and of giving them the opportunity to say they would like to do it and therefore give a positive answer. Only one parent came forth with a remark about actually going to the library. Most of the answers with comments included something about hoping to go someday.

Out of ninety-nine possible negative answers (nine questions in the first two items for eleven families), there was only one negative answer (this does not show up in the table because one negative answer out of a possible five questions in the item simply rendered an overall score of "ambivalent" for the item).

Responses to the other two items in Table 1 were unanimously positive. Therefore, it seems that we should rely more on behavioral items to distinguish parents on favorability toward education.

Because it has not been too many years since I heard adamant negative values concerning these questions, I knew to probe beneath the surface of these answers. It was expected that the follow-up questions about specific attitudes and those about objective behaviors following from the reported aspirations and positive attitudes would be negative. The following questions were asked:

What college do you have in mind? (Item 23)

What school people have you all talked to about _____ (child) going to college? (Item 24)

If _____(child) goes to college, how will it be paid for? (Item 25)

The results are shown in Table 2.

TABLE 2

NUMBER OF FAMILIES EXPRESSING POSITIVE, AMBIVALENT, OR NEGATIVE BEHAVIORS TOWARD PLANS FOR COLLEGE USING THREE MEASURES

	Positive (Yes)	Ambivalent	Negative (No)
Have specific college in mind (Item 23)	3	1	7
Have talked to school staff about college (Item 24)	1	1	7
Indicates thought about how to pay for college (Item 25)	1	2	8

In spite of the fact that all parents had said in Item 22 that they wanted their child to go to college, the parents of only three children had "a specific college in mind." One of these was quite dubious, and another did not name a specific school. However, the benefit of the doubt was given them. It is interesting to examine what the parents of these children said for having a college in mind. One family named a bible school. (Theirs was the one ambivalent rating for Item 24, talking to school staff; though it was a letter to the bible school--not contact with the high school--I counted it at least as in between positive and negative.) One father named one of the universities in Dixie City, an outstanding, well-known one; he had not talked with anyone nor had the son. Without any real negative

evidence, I had to give him the positive rating, though his answers throughout the interview were "right" ones and had little credibility. A third parent answering positively about higher education spoke specifically about her daughter's intention to go to a veterinarian's school, though no school name was mentioned. She is the only parent giving an acceptable answer about means of paying for college: through some sort of scholarship aid from the company where her divorced husband currently works. Also, this mother was the one parent reporting contact with school staff about the possibility of college: her child had talked with teachers. (She and one other mother were the only parents who had ever gone to the school, in both cases, only one time.)

It is interesting to discuss here what the children of these parents who had positive and ambivalent answers for these items said about going to college. One boy named "technical college"; this was virtually the same as his mother's answers (and he was interviewed separately). The one "ambivalence" was hers. Another boy was present during his/parents' interview, and therefore his answers are not independent. However, he said he was going to college and named what I am sure he thought his father said, "State," which is not a part of the school's name. One girl, though with her mother for both interviews, said "no" she didn't want to go to college but did talk about the bible school. She said she wanted to be a housewife.

Next, there was a lengthy item about attitudes toward a child moving away from family and hometown for a good job. Item 26 asked, "Do you think it is all right for a child to move away from family and hometown for a good job

- if it's nearby?

- if it's to a big city?
- if it's about 40 miles away?
- if it's about 100 miles away?
- if it's about 1,000 miles away?"

Dixie City is about 40 miles away from Milldale. I included two questions that implied moving to Dixie City: "if it's a big city" and "if it's about 40 miles away." I wanted to examine a subtlety here: to see if the parents had a bias against large cities as well as distance. Table 3 shows the results of this multi-question item.

TABLE 3

NUMBER OF FAMILIES REPORTING POSITIVE, AMBIVALENT, OR NEGATIVE ATTITUDES TOWARD CHILDREN MOVING AWAY FROM FAMILY AND HOMETOWN (Item 26)

Moving:	Positive	Ambivalent	Negative
Nearby	3	8	0
To a big city	2	6	3
40 miles away	3	6	2
100 miles away	2	3	6
1,000 miles away	0	4	7

Out of 55 possible "positive" answers, we find only ten, and these come from only three of the eleven children's parents. Many Milldale young adults now living in or near Milldale commute to Dixie City. It appears to be an acceptable option when jobs are hard to find. Usually they live at home until they are married--then if they do move, they live nearby. Even

so, very few felt favorable toward moving within commuting distance. No parent felt positive about a move 1,000 miles away. The parents answering positively about moving were the two mothers with a high school education and a mother who ranks next to them in status, travel, etc.--all women (mothers) interviewed without husbands. One of those did not feel favorable toward the move to a big city or 100 miles away.

There were some unfavorable feelings about moving to a big city compared with "nearby," and there was a slight difference in feelings about moving "to a big city" compared with moving "40 miles away," the latter being slightly preferable to the former.

Ambivalent answers and reservations included the following remarks:

- "they should stay home until they get married"
- "all right if they lived with another family there"
- "OK if it's 40 miles away, but not if it's a big city"
- "if they don't live alone" (nearby--not acceptable further away)
- "if they know right or wrong"
- (city) "if old enough"
- (nearby) "for a boy, not a girl"

Item 29 asked, "Should a child do well in school

- because it helps get a good job?
- to get into college?"

Table 4 shows the results.

TABLE 4

NUMBER OF FAMILIES REPORTING POSITIVE, AMBIVALENT, AND NEGATIVE ATTITUDES TOWARD DOING WELL IN SCHOOL FOR UPWARD MOBILITY, USING TWO MEASURES

	Positive	Ambivalent	Negative
To get a good job	7	2	2
To get into college	8	2	1

It was expected that most parents would be negative and that the positive answers would come from the parents with the highest education, status, and/or aspirations, a total of four families. However, only one of these was positive. My opinion is that most simply gave "right answers."

In further analysis, five children's parents answered positively for the questions in this item. These included one child's parents who answered almost all items "ideally." The other four often gave "pat" answers. The only parent who answered negatively for college and job was the harried mother who seemed slightly dazed (drugged ?) and therefore incapable of pretenses or calculations of right answers.

As another measure for orientation toward education and upward mobility as a function of it, I asked the parents for their opinions about academic/cultural subjects being taught in school. These subjects were interspersed among others for a total of 17 and fell into 3 groups with one,"hygiene/health," not fitting any of these categories, as follows:

The Basics	Academic/Cultural	Vocational	Misc.
reading	plays (like Shakespeare)	cooking (for girls)	hygiene/ health
handwriting	writing stories	car repair- ing (for boys)	
grammar	science		
business arithmetic	foreign languages		
	music		
	art		
	algebra		
	geometry		
	history		
	geography		

"History" and "geography" were placed as above, but I thought they might be considered basics.

It soon became apparent that many were answering positively for all or almost all the subjects--very rapidly and without much thought. One family answered positively for all the subjects and another, all but one. (Both answered positively on all questions in the preceding item we discussed.) The following table shows details of the results for all the parents.

TABLE 5

NUMBER OF FAMILIES REPORTING POSITIVE, AMBIVALENT, AND NEGATIVE ATTITUDES TOWARD ACADEMIC/CULTURAL SUBJECTS

Subjects	Positive	Ambivalent	Negative
plays (like Shakespeare)	3	4	4
writing stories	6	4	1
science	8	2	1
foreign languages	5	3	3
music	7	3	1
art	5	4	2
algebra	10	1	0
geometry	7	4	0
history	10	0	1
geography	9	2	0

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The expectation that history and geography might be considered basics--and therefore looked upon favorably--is confirmed here. The relatively positive reaction to algebra and geometry can be attributed to the fact that since we were asking about high school subjects we could not include the basic "arithmetic" and therefore algebra and geometry rated high, being considered "arithmetic" subjects. We did include "business arithmetic" as a basic, but it did not get the reaction that was expected for the basics, that is, it was not positive unanimously though it did rate as high as algebra and geometry.

In summary, the families were somewhat more favorable toward cultural/academic subjects as a whole than was predicted, but these may have been "polite" answers. A goodly number were ambivalent or negative toward plays, creative writing, art, and foreign languages. However, the three "pure basics," reading, handwriting, and grammar, all received positive answers unanimously (reported in another part of the larger study).

Parents' Orientation Toward Encouragement of Education at Home

Items about parents' orientation toward educational activities with their children were used to measure encouragement of education at home. These activities are divided into five groups for discussion: (1) pre-school educational activities with the child, (2) playing educational games with the child, (3) the child's activities and attendance of events outside the home, (4) visits to Dixie City, and (5) family trips and vacations away from home. Table 7 on page 26 shows the compilation of findings.

Parents were asked questions about teaching their children to read, write, and count before school and about reading to their child prior to school attendance as follows:

Item 6. Before _____(child) went to school, did anyone in the family teach him/her how to read? to write? to count?

Item 8. Did anyone in the family read to _____(child)?

Expectations were that the parents might answer affirmatively and that such an answer might not be reliable, so (1) back-up questions--who taught the child the skills (Item 7), who read to the child (Item 9), and what the child's favorite story or book was (Item 10)--were asked for each of these items, and (2) children were asked the same questions.

If the parents could not answer the question in Item 6, hedged about them, expressed ambivalence about them, were ambiguous, or gave nonsense answers, then the answer to the original question, if positive, was considered invalid and the orientation in that case was considered "negative."

The parents of four children were given positive scores for "teaching pre-school skills; two were ambivalent, and five were negative (see Table 7 on page 26). The parents answering negatively simply said they could not remember, or the skills they mentioned were minimal ("ABC's," "few letters," "a little"). The two ambivalent parents' answers did not give me enough information--they said their children could read a little and count, in one case, and could name ABC's, in the other. Lack of further information forced this classification.

The scores for two of the parents rated "positive" do not represent absolute conviction on my part. One father said an unconvincing "yes" for so many items on the schedule that his adamant "yes" on all the parts of this one leaves me with doubts, but lacking further information I was impelled to give the positive score.

One mother's positive answers about all the skills would be believable

(because of her family's relatively higher standard of living) if I did not know from living in her home and from frequent visits over time that she performed none of these activities with her two pre-school grandnieces whom she cared for every day of the week. Also, I know that all of her own child's report card comments from the teachers during the early grades were pleas to help the child with these skills that were always below average during elementary school years.

Scores for "reading to the child" were two positives, no ambivalences, and nine negatives. All parents, with one exception (a mother who thought the child's sister "may have" read to the child), said "yes" they had read to their child (Item 8). However, only two parents gave a positive answer to the back-up questions (Items 9 and 10) that was even somewhat convincing. One parent said the favorite book was Heidi, and her child said the same thing. The other parent talked about "Rover" books and named another one; and, even though the child could remember none, I counted the answer "positive."

Vagueness about what the favorite reading was included answers such as "fire trucks," "about rabbits"; most (parents and children) could not remember any stories or books.

I would like to include here the orientation to these two items--pre-school skills and reading to the child--as I observed these activities and the environment in the key-informant home.*

The Bible and newspapers seem to be in most cases the only written materials observed in the homes. In the Anderson home--which in fact might be considered a fraction above most of the homes visited in stability, amount

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*Portions of this descriptive material are taken from another paper (Dillman 1979).

and distance of travel, visits to cultural places, etc.--the Bible is the only book in the living room. They do take the daily Dixie City newspaper and the local weekly. Church-oriented literature is the only other kind of periodical I ever saw there. I brought some women's magazines to them (some I had read and was through with), and Mrs. Anderson (the wife/mother) and Annie May (the daughter) were enthusiastic about having them and did read at least parts of them. However, I doubt that either one would spend her own money on them. In the room that was their son's (and now houses a pool table and the freezer), there are some books in a bookcase. These books all fell into three categories: old school textbooks (including some of Mr. Anderson's); sport books that were the son's (he didn't take them with him to his marital home); and some religiously oriented books (the son has been and is still heavily involved in church activities).

I had the opportunity to observe frequently and for long periods of time Mrs. Anderson's interaction with and socialization of her husband's two grandnieces whom she babysat. One child was three years old at the time of observation; the other, five. Mrs. Anderson kept a large trunk-like box filled with play things for them. There were no educational toys. Socialization did of course take place. The most common teaching-learning interaction had to do with pretend homemaking activities such as make-believe cooking and serving food. Training in Southern courtesies was embedded throughout the interaction. The children were corrected if they didn't say "yes, ma'am" and the like. I never saw Mrs. Anderson read to the children--indeed there were no children's books ever in the house during my visits. At one time I did witness an activity of writing dots to form letters that the older child connected with a pencil. This, however, stemmed from some

activity in a nursery school she attended briefly.

On one occasion, Mrs. Anderson expressed to my husband and me her concern about one of the children being unable to learn. She thought she should be in a special pre-school situation where this handicap could be corrected. Although we probed about the matter to elicit some home alternative or adjunct, it was never suggested that the child's mother or Mrs. Anderson herself might work with the child at learning educational skills. Education in the home is simply never considered; education appears to be considered the responsibility of the schools. Incidentally, my husband and I saw no apparent problem with the child.

I am sure that Mrs. Anderson socialized her own children in the same manner as she was socializing these children and that the process is common with this population. It confirms my observations over many years.

Returning to the interview schedule, Item 11 asked the following question: "Do you all play any games with _____ (child)?" It was explained that I did not mean athletic games. Back-up questions asked what the games were and what was the child's favorite game.

Of the seven children with parents reporting that they played educational games with their children, only four validated their answers by naming specific ones. Surprisingly, however, the named games in three of these cases included chess. Others mentioned were checkers, cards, Monopoly, and Concentration. Responses leading to "negative" included "coloring books" and "mostly cuttin' up and wrastlin'" even though the item was reworded to try to make it clear that educational games were intended. The only parents answering negatively for the follow-up items as well as for the original question were one girl's parents who don't believe in game-playing because of their fundamentalism. One original negative answer was changed to ambivalent because the back-up

questions revealed game-playing with cousins and an older sister. (The intention of the question was parental involvement with the child, so this answer did not merit "positive.")

A major item was asked about taking the child (or, by implication, allowing the child to go) to the following:

ball games

movies

swimming

church

[topographical phenomenon with activities park as adjunct, located nearby]

roller rink

museum

musical concert

[local famous historical display]

library

Answer options were "never," "once," "sometimes," and "lots of times."

Ball games, movies, swimming, roller rink, and church were placebo items. It was assumed--and correctly--that these places would be well attended in general and would allow for many positive answers. Although swimming in inland rural areas is not common, I knew the community pool (built by the owner of the mills) was particularly crowded all summer, even though it cost 50¢ for every entry. (The question of what constitutes being "disadvantaged" crops up when it is known that most of the children in the community went swimming at the pool at least once a day and many times twice a day, this expenditure in addition to money spent for junk food sold at the pool all day.) Roller skating at a public rink is very popular in rural Southern areas--a major amusement activity.

Only the two girls from fundamentalist families had never attended a ball game and had rarely ever gone to the movies, and one of them had never been swimming or roller skating. The rest, almost without exception, had gone to ball games and movies and been skating and swimming "lots." No parent or child reported his/her going to church "never" or only "once."

The following table shows the findings about attendance at the cultural events and visits to cultural places.

TABLE 6

NUMBER OF CHILDREN ATTENDING CULTURAL EVENTS AND VISITING CULTURAL PLACES, BY FREQUENCY, USING FOUR MEASURES

Event/Place	Never	Once	Sometimes	Lots	Amb./No. Ans.
museum	3	3	1	1	3
musical concert	6	1	4	0	0
historical display	3	3	2	1	2
topographical phenomenon	1	1	7	0	2

The answers from parents and children were combined to use what appeared to be the fullest, most credible answers. "Library" had to be omitted because of conflicts in answers to it in the context and answers to other items about library use. A critical survey of all the answers about library use and attendance showed that even positive answers in one or two cases would not alter the scores on this item as they appear after compilation.

The parents and their children, whether with or without the parents during the interviews, agreed almost all the time for all the answers. Any disagree-

ment was trivial, having to do with further elaboration on the part of one or the other.

As the parents and children answered these questions during the interviews, I was surprised to find that the answers were not universally negative for the cultural events and places as I had expected. However, it soon became apparent that attendance and visits were school oriented (or church oriented in the case of "musical concerts"). These excursions were not family outings in general. One child who went to a museum "lots of times" was the only one who went with the immediate family, and this was usually in connection with a visit to an extended-family relative who lived near the place.

All attendances at musical concerts were school- or church-oriented, the latter almost exclusively gospel sings, but credit was given for these. There were only two children who had seen the historical display with family. It is assumed that the topographical phenomenon was well attended--by three children with their families--because of the park atmosphere that includes boat rides, picnicking, etc.

The final scores for the compilations in Table 7 (at the end of this section) were computed by assigning "positive" for those children who clearly attended/visited at least three of the four events/places at least once with their parent(s). An ambivalent score indicated (1) that there were three places visited but that there were serious doubts on my part when combining parents' and child's answers, (2) that the parents were ambivalent, or (3) if the visits were made with relatives other than parents. The three positive scores did not include any with four events nor many visits to each of the three.

General questions were asked about taking the child to Dixie City and on vacation trips away from home. Back-up questions included specifics about what they did on these excursions and vacations. The object was to determine if the parents included any educational or cultural activities. The questions were the following:

Item 15. Do you all ever take _____(child) to [Dixie City]?

Item 16. What special things do you all do in [Dixie City] when you take him/her there?

Item 17. Do you all ever go on trips or vacations away from home?

Item 18. Where are some of the places you all went?

Item 19. What special things did you all do in these places?

For further confirmation, the children were asked, "Have you ever been away from [Center] County on trips?" (Item 13) and "Where have you been?" (Item 14). Ratings were arrived at by the following:

Visits to Dixie City

positive: if "sightseeing" was included in the answer

if the large park was mentioned along with the historical display there, the zoo, the art center, museum, etc., or if the Dixie City science center was mentioned

(Other cultural/historical places/events would have counted, but none were mentioned.)

ambivalent: if the city park was mentioned but without naming a cultural place with it

"go look"

negative: shopping

"see a doctor"

visit relatives

amusement park

negative (cont'd.) church

hospital

Vacation/Trip

positive: "sightseeing" in adjacent states

travel to many states whether or not sightseeing was mentioned

ambivalent: (there were none)

negative: church

visit relatives

"never out of the state"

swimming and/or camping only

No parent or child actually mentioned historical places for vacation trips, but credit was given as outlined above. Traveling to many states certainly involves exposure and eliminates isolation from other cultures and progress. The scores included two positive ratings for visits to Dixie City, two ambivalences, and seven negatives; for trips/vacations, five positives, no ambivalences, and six negatives.

Table 7 shows the findings for the six measures in this section. If we add all the positive ratings and divide by the six measures, we find an average of only 3.6 of the 11 parents reporting encouragement of educational success at home. In many instances there was great leniency in the ratings, and strictly speaking they would not have been even this high were such leniency reduced.

TABLE 7

NUMBER OF CHILDREN WITH PARENT(S) REPORTING POSITIVE, AMBIVALENT, AND NEGATIVE ENCOURAGEMENT OF EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS AT HOME, USING SIX MEASURES

Measures	Positive	Ambivalent	Negative
1. Teaching pre-school skills (Items 6,7)	4	2	5
2. Reading to the child (Items 8, 9, 10)	2	0	9
3. Playing educational games with child (Items 11, 12, 13)	4	2	5
4. Cultural activities/ events (Item 14)	3	4	4
5. Dixie City cultural visits (Items 15, 16)	2	2	7
6. Trips/vacations cultural activities (Items 17, 18, 19)	5	0	6

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Parents responded positively to global questions concerning attitudes toward education and upward mobility through education. This was a "lip-service" response that was expected. However, also as expected, answers to questions concerning expressed behaviors of these attitudes were mainly negative as were the answers to those questions about moving away as part of upward mobility. Parents answered positively to questions about reasons for success in school that pertained to upward mobility, and they also expressed positive attitudes toward academic/cultural school subjects. We had expected these answers to be negative, but there appeared to be many "ideal" answers by parents. Further examination of the results by individual parents showed a clear trend that several parents were indeed answering ideally most of the time and that those who were answering more realistically were responding as predicted.

Although all parents, with one exception, said they had read to their children, only two parents gave a convincingly positive answer to the back-up questions. Few children were taught pre-school skills. The families were more well traveled than had been expected. However, there was almost total absence of taking advantage of the many cultural events and historical places in and around the area.

From the in-depth case studies of the eleven families (and from the information obtained about the other families), it is inconceivable that any of the children would go to college or move away from family and community. Also the economic determinants of the local status structure are simply not connected with the world of college. One begins to perceive the cultural values as an impediment to education and upward mobility.

The importance of small-sample, case-study qualitative research such as reported here cannot be disregarded. It is imperative that educators know these underlying cultural reasons that rural children of such background do not aspire educationally or occupationally. By bringing these problems to the attention of educators and policymakers, it is hoped that a better understanding of the people and their culture will help in dealing with the education of rural children in the South.

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